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THE
S T A T E
O F
S U R G E R Y:

But more Particularly,
The Disadvantages its PROFESSORS
lie under Considered.



[Price Sixpence.]

James Gagg

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I N A
L E T T E R
F R O M A

GENTLEMAN in TOWN to his
FRIEND in the COUNTRY;

Occasioned by
The Latter having a DESIGN to apprentice
his SON to that ART.

L O N D O N:

Printed for the A U T H O R.

And Sold by R. BALDWIN, at the *Rose* in *Pater-Noster-Row*.

M D C C L I I.

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THE
STATE
OF
SURGERY.

S I R,

IN Compliance with your's of last Month, I have endeavoured to make myself somewhat acquainted with the Business you wrote upon. --- Mr. S---p is a Gentleman of good Morals, genteel Education, and I believe very just-
B ly

ly reckoned at the Head of his Profession, and should your Resolution continue to apprentice my Godson to be brought up in the Knowledge of that Science, I know No One I would sooner recommend for a Master. --- But I have your's, and his Interest, too much at Heart to see it carried into Execution without mature Deliberation. — His Welfare, and the Comfort you would draw from his Success, are two Points I am myself so closely connected with, that I cannot wish to see this intended Scheme of yours take Place, as that genteel Art is so reduced by the increased Number of HOSPITALS.

It may seem strange to any one, not immediately concerned or interested in the following Particulars, that I should represent as a Partial Evil, that which is esteemed an Universal Good and Charity; and that from my late Enquiries, at your particular Request, I am forced to confess the Influence they now have over me falls very short of what it has been in Times past, and like the Sun behind a Cloud shine forth dim and obscure.

If

If it should appear, that Numbers of the GENTLEMEN of that Profession, which you at present are disposed to make your Son a Member of, are every Day approaching more and more to a total State of Absence from Business, and their Families, those of them, who have no Other Support, begin already to taste the bitter Potion of Want; it will appear less extraordinary to you that I dissent to a Scheme you are so solicitous should succeed, and which my Godson has, to all Appearance, set his Mind upon.

All Monopolies, whether in Merchandise, or otherwise, are justly and generally in Disesteem, and when carried into Execution seldom fail sooner or later to bring Ruin on the Individuals of that Branch of Business so engrossed;---so it is to be feared there is too great a Similitude between this Sort of Monopoly, and the Number of Hospitals engrossing so much of the Surgeons Business, that I am informed one half of the City Professors have scarce Employment sufficient to de-

fray the lightest Circumstance of Expence.

It is a Maxim, and an established Adage, that private Ills must give Way to publick Good. — This, I think, is principally adopted in State Matters, and Government Occurrences, and in that Point of View only may invariably hold good, as a *Machievellian* Principle, and unerring Rule, but in the Case before us, I think it cannot be used with any such demonstrative Certainty, for to interest Individuals against Individuals, of the same general Community, surely claims another Sort of Consideration, and must in its Nature lessen that Charity, however well intended, or so much boasted of.

For if I relieve one Family in Distress, and take such a Method to do it, as cannot fail in Time to bring on Poverty and Want upon Another; Where is the Charity of all this? Or how, upon an Impartial Scrutiny, will it appear I have benefited my Fellow Creature agreeable to the true Tenets of Charity, --- when I am
with

withdrawing a Livelihood from that Body of Men, whose Expence of Education, and seven Years Servitude, give them a just Title, and natural, as well as lawful Claim to it, to bestow it on Those, Who are unworthy in themselves, Who are every Day abusing their Heavenly, as well as Earthly Benefactors in Instances of the most monstrous Ingratitude and Abuse of his Creatures thro' beastly Excess.

This is confirmed to me by too many Instances, and what may be daily seen by any one, who will descend to look into the unhappy Morals, Customs, and Manners of our Poor and Indigent.—To take up a poor Wretch in the Street under the Misfortune of a broken Limb, and sending him away to St. *Thomas's*, *Guy's*, or to St. *Bartholomew's* Hospital, for Cure is a laudable Thing, and seems grateful to the Heart of every reasonable thinking Man.

But why must We grow Wanton in our Charities? — Why must We add to the Number, 'till they are almost
out

out of Number; especially if such a Conduct should be found destructive of a Maintenance to almost a whole Body, and Commonalty, and which in Time cannot but bring on Misery and Ruin?— Was it ever known that an unfortunate Cripple lay in the Streets for Want of an HOSPITAL to receive Him in, when there was no more than the Three above-mentioned? To which I answer in the Negative, both from Forty Years Experience in this City, and from Enquiry of Others: Whence then the Use, or Necessity for such a numerous Offspring, whose Birth and Life is, by Consequence, Death and Misery to so great a Body as the Practitioners of Surgery are at this Time, (very few excepted)?

Those, who plead for Plurality, will argue, that neither of the old established HOSPITALS have received one less Patient in Number than they were wont to have, when the new-set-up Ones had no Existence; and that if their Numbers continue to be the same, and that it appears by the printed Lists sent forth for the Public

Perusal

Perusal, we cure from Five Thousand to Seven each Year; does not this, they say, amount to a Demonstration, that there are so many more Objects relieved, and that it is an undeniable Proof of the Expediency and Utility of our New HOSPITALS.

To this I answer, that supposing the Premises religiously consonant to Truth, that Hundreds of those, who are printed off in their Lists, are truly pitiable Objects, and not in great Part, *Those*, who were wont to lay up a Moiety of their Week's Earnings to pay their Surgeon and Apothecary in a proportionate Manner to their Circumstances, and Gains by Labour, I should be ready to acknowledge the Merits of Plurality, but even then within a reasonable Number.

But should I be unhappy enough to think this frugal Conduct in the Husband is, in great Measure, now resolved, and converted to the Gin-Shop, or Ale-house, or devoted for a *Sunday's* Junket for them, their Wives and Children, at some Cake
House

House remote from the Town, by which the Duty of the Sabbath is neglected, their Children initiated thus early in one of the most pernicious Courses, which 'tis with Difficulty ever after shaken off, and the Father by this Means becomes a ruinous Example to his Offspring, and the incumbent Duty he lies under, both as to Spiritual and Bodily Health, wholly discontinued and thrown off.

But this is not all. There is another mischievous Consequence arising in all Probability from the same Fountain. It is not indeed what I can be presumed to know from my own Experience. But I have heard both the Carpenters and Bricklayers complain, that their Journeymen were every Day growing worse, and would now scarce be prevailed upon to work above three Days in a Week; and upon asking them, what they looked upon to be the Cause of it. Their Answer constantly was, amongst other Reasons, the great Increase of HOSPITALS had no small Share in it. For while they themselves, their Wives and Children could
be

be provided for in Case of Sicknefs; and their Wives taken care of in their Lying in, they would only work juſt ſo much, as was neceſſary for their Subſiſtence and Indulgence in eating and drinking, ſcarce having Cloaths to their Back. Whether they be right or not, I do not take upon me to determine. But if any Perſon pleaſes to conſult thoſe Mechanicks, they will find what I ſay to be true. And they aſcribe a Cauſe no ways improbable in the Eyes of thoſe who conſider the uſual Conduct of Journeymen Mechanicks. I wiſh the ſame be not found true of Weavers and other Manufacturers, upon which depends the very being of that Trade and Navigation, which have rendered this Kingdom ſo glorious; and Merchants would do well to conſider at leaſt of this Affair, leſt they ſhould be rather doing an Injury than a Benefit to their Country; not to take notice how much more beneficial it is to the under Mechanick himſelf to be obliged to employ more of his Time in Work, than we find he does, as one may be certain that it will turn to a worſe Account.

If I am not misled in this Point ; if, I say, I have been taught to believe These are the Order of People, who serve principally to swell the Numbers of our New HOSPITALS, so much set off and magnified ; I must then thereby be induced to think, and to repeat that St. *Thomas's*, *Guy's*, St. *Bartholomew's*, and that erected at *Hyde-Park* Corner are sufficient to receive all those who are truly pitiable Objects, or those who strictly and justly are entitled to the Charity and Affluence of their Fellow Creature.

I never will but believe that every Governor of these HOSPITALS does become so from a real good Motive ; but, if in Consequence thereof, it should appear by attending to the Nature of the Thing, and by impartially remarking the Customs and Usages in Times past, that this Circumstance serves still to oppress the private Practitioner, and I hope to be excused if I should draw in my own Mind an Opinion, that each Governor, in Process of Time, is hereby a Gainer to Himself.

That

That every Governor has a Power to send an Object as an In-Patient, and also any one to be an Out-Patient, and this latter at any Time, without any Constraint or Restriction, no One will, I believe, contend with me; and that their own Men, and Women Servants, are, as Occasion offers, the Objects of this Privilege, is as great a Truth.—That this Privilege does not stop here, or rest with the Governor's own Family, but likewise extends to any one of the said Governor's Acquaintance, and to the Use and Benefit of his or their Servants, in as full a Manner, as if He or They were Governors or Contributors themselves, and so on *ad Infinitum*, so long as the Governor continues to be, or such HOSPITAL or HOSPITALS in a State of Existence.

The relieving such Servants in this Manner will appear not only detrimental to the Surgeon, but also to the Apothecary, for although *Mary* and *Thomas*, their Sickness and Casualties, the Cure

of which was not rated on the Surgeon's and Apothecary's Books equal to their Masters and Mistresses, yet always were productive of some Consideration adequate to their Stations, and proportionate to their Circumstances, and that it was no unusual Thing for the good Master and Mistress to present the Practitioners with something more than the Amount of their own Bill, as an Acknowledgment for his Attendance below Stairs.

This latter Circumstance is, (by Consequence only) made a saving Clause, through the Master's commencing Governor; and that not only his Servants, as I have said before, but those also of All his Acquaintance, (if he pleases) feel the Sunshine of his Power, and the little Emoluments which would otherwise arise hereby to the Practitioners aforementioned are cast into the Lap of Monopoly.

I would not have you misunderstand me in this Particular relative to the Governor, I do not mean to insinuate any thing

thing to the contrary, but that every Gentleman advances his Donation with a good and praise-worthy Intent: But be the Motive in the Governor what it will, I cannot, I think, miscarry in my Opinion of its Consequences, or that any Negative can be offered to its standing in the first Class of Truth.

And that the relieving one appears to me the distressing of another, that it mars the Purity of Charity, if, when two Objects present themselves dying with Hunger, we do not divide the Morsel to preserve the Lives of Both, and that by supporting such an abounding Number of HOSPITALS for one and the same Use, one favourite Tree in Paradise is water'd with the Dew of Charity, while we neglect the rest, and suffer them to pine and wither away thro' a partial Distribution of our Favours, and for Want of an extensive View and due Consideration had to its Effects and Consequences.

It has been for several Years past a Practice, not to say a Fashionable One, to run
into

into publick Charities, and indeed such has been its swift Progress, that it may not be deem'd an unreasonable Supposition to imagine they will sink in a few Years with as much Rapidity.

Like most other Affairs, which have a precipitate Beginning, they will be apt in general to subside as hastily,---Celerity of Motion, like Quickness in the Progress of other Matters, requires an ample and an abounding Stock in the Stamina to enable its Duration, or it will soon grate hard upon its own Basis, and become destitute of all Motion.

If any Humour or Caprice is blended in the Composition of our Charity; or if we will persist to relieve one Order of People, at the manifest Detriment and Misery of another of one and the same general Community, we are doing I fear little towards that God-like and noble End, unless we deceive ourselves, and have a Method of bringing our Consciences to a Balance, as we do our Books, and for one Family reduced to Want, we set off
on

on the Credit Side a broken Limb reduced, or half a dozen fore Legs cured at our Recommendation.

From what I have already said, it might be urged by the Inconsiderate, had any one the Perusal beside yourself, that I am without Feeling, that I am without Charity; but 'tis to you only I appeal in this World, and to that Being, who knows the Hearts of all Men, and from whom nothing can be hid.

You know, (I say) that I have contributed at a certain Place my poor Mite, and shall continue to do so, while I have Existence on Earth, or Feeling for my Fellow Creature, and I hope the Sense of their Miseries and Misfortunes will together sink with my Life into the Hands of Him who blessed me with these happy Faculties.--- You know I look'd carefully round me before my Offering was deposited, and am in no Fear of a Discovery either from you, or any Golden Capitals prefixed.---I have encreased my Donations in Proportion to my Fortune, and as I could privately learn
the

the Exigencies of this Charity stood in Need, which is in itself new, and an Original in its Institution. — One only, and not extended to a numberless Number :---No Body-Incorporate, nor the Interests of a Commonalty declining in Proportion to its Rise :---No Eye made to languish on its rising Structure, nor a broken Spirit sighing forth its Complaints, or issuing from the dark Corner of Misery and Want against its Promoters.—Chearfulness and Unanimity swell the cordial Breast of the Managers, while Superiority is remote from their Thoughts.—No aiming at Distinction, nor established Precedency among the Governors, but just enough to answer the End of Order, and true Management. — No assuming Arrogance in the Mind of any Practitioner, or Practitioners, has yet dared to shew its Brazen Face to disturb its Peace, or to raise Parties among the Governors.---Rectitude of Institution, and Charity not sullied with the impoverishing of others, are its Fundamentals, and 'tis with Heart-feeling Joy I can assure you, it has already made large Strides to Perpetuity.

That

That this is the present happy State and Condition of it, I have repeated Opportunities of convincing myself, for like *Titus* of *Moldavia*, in the *Turkish* Spy, I can inform myself of every Transaction, while my Intent, and true Person continues unsuspected.

But to return: — Which leads me to mention to you, for your further Information, another Particular, by which my Godson must be detrimented in: The true Value of his Apprentice-Fee greatly lessen'd; the first Class of Indenture in that Profession (as you think of one of the Head for his Master) reduced to an inferior Level, and his City Freedom, by this first Order of Servitude, lessen'd greatly in its true Dignity.

This Particular does not so properly belong to the Institution of these HOSPITALS, as it is a Consequence of them, and more immediately introduced (if it is true that it is done at all) by the Practitioners belonging thereto. — If it be not true, or
D be

be wanting in Authority for its Support, the Insinuation lies not at my Door, but at the Door of one of Fifty Years Practice himself, whom I shall have Occasion hereafter to mention with respect to the Advantages, which formerly have been made by the Article of Bleeding; and from whom I have been told, if we will look into, and will attend to the Usage of HOSPITALS, we shall then find a Train of young Fellows under the Rank and Denomination of Pupils, or young Men withdrawn for a Time from the Country, and Places of their Servitude, who come hither only for Improvement, paying the customary Consideration for such Benefit received; and when so advantaged, to return from whence they came.

If this was all, no Injury would then hereby be done to the more regular bred Surgeon. But if, upon the Principles I have been taught to conceive, it should be found, that several of them, for a certain Sum agreed on betwixt the Master and supposed Pupil, do become Apprentices for a certain determined Time; and that at the

Expi-

Expiration of the said Time, or indirect Apprenticeship, the counterfeit Pupil settles in *London*, who, by adding to the Numbers, consequently makes what little Business there is, still less, as it becomes more and more divided.—That from this Craft he enjoys all the Liberties and Privileges in common with him, who has served his regular Apprenticeship at an extraordinary Expence; the Intent of the City Freedom, as also of the Companies, is vitiated, and the Country Apothecary's Apprentice is by this Means metamorphosed into the City bred Surgeon.

This may have been a Practice, for ought I know, long before the establishing of any of the new HOSPITALS; but if it has been at any Time, or at any Place, the Method of acting, the more is the Pity, and the Misfortune the greater, by more Opportunities for its Repetition.—This, as I have observed before, if it is done, is an Evil, in the Power of the Governors to prevent.

But then it more immediately falls under the Cognizance of the Principals of the Sur-

geon's Company to regulate, and to redress; to inspect narrowly if any such Abuses are committed or not, and to suppress them, as they would wish a general Welfare to their own Community, and would preserve and maintain due Sanction and Dignity to all those, whom they shall themselves bring up.

Another Thing which I have collected for your sake only, and which has been set forth to me in very strong Terms, is a Charge levelled against the Professors of that Art, which you yourself have follow'd with Reputation for many Years; That they have for a long Series of Time gone on undisturbed in the free Use of the Lancet.—That not contenting themselves with infringing the Prerogative of another Commonalty, but that when Age, or bad Sight, has come upon them, when they could no longer continue in this indirect Course, that then they have connived at their Journeymen's succeeding in this unfair Procedure, on agreeing to refund a Share of the Profits.

It

It has been asserted to me of others of the same Class, that they have stipulated with their Journeymen for low Wages, in Consideration of an Indulgence in, and Assistance from the said Master, to obtain the Profits of Bleeding, whenever Opportunities should offer.

If these Things are so ; If I have not been imposed upon in this my Enquiry ; Is it not a manifest Hardship the Chirurgical Practitioners labour under ? Is it not time it should be redressed ? Does it not loudly speak for Assistance, and strongly sue for Justice from the Elders of that Commonalty ? Would you, after all these Disadvantages, throw your Son into a Channel that he must starve in ? Would you wish him to be staked down in a Pool full of Leeches ? Would it not go near to break your Heart, after all the Expence you have been at already for Classick Education, and that genteel one you have devoted for his Apprentice Fee, to see him in a few Years an Inmate in the House of another Profession, with his Name in faded
Capi-

Capitals, peeping from under a gloomy Pent-House?

This Article of Bleeding would be a very considerable Branch of their Business, was it not usurp'd, or was it not thus engrossed, and made the Property of Foreigners.---It carries with it its present Reward, and before the Establishment of so many new HOSPITALS; before it was thus become the Practice of others; it has been asserted to me, and very lately too, by a Gentleman of Fifty Years being in Business, that he has got by the Article of Bleeding three and four Hundred Pounds a Year;---and he added, that the Profession of a Surgeon was, on Account of so many HOSPITALS, become nothing worth, and that it was his Belief, in a very few Years there would not be ten Surgeons in this City, beside those attach'd to the HOSPITALS.

This is the same Gentleman I spoke of before, and to whom indeed (without letting him know for what Cause I enquired) I applied for Part of my Information in your
 Behalf.

Behalf. ---- But will you not be surprized, when I can assure you, that notwithstanding this his Declaration, and since the Time of his making it, that I have traced him, with the Finger of Encouragement, and directing Hand at a certain H-----L. --- Would you suspect such want of Candour, such Sparks of Disingenuity inhabiting the Breast of any one?

I have said enough already of his long standing, for you to rank him in the Class of Old Age, and therefore would you not think it was full Time for a Man to begin to grow honest to himself, and to that Body he has been connected to so many Years? Would you not think his Integrity by this Time of Day sufficiently established to withstand all Temptations, all Glare? Would you not imagine his own Affluence, which has been all obtained by his Profession, sufficient to bring back to his Memory his own naked Beginning? Sufficient to prevent his joining in the common Stream of adverse Fortune against his Brethren, to make him commiserate
their

their Want of a Livelihood ; and sufficient to bestir him to support the generous Independency of that Art, by which he has acquired such a distinguishing Fortune.— His long standing, superadded to his Wealth, would give him great Weight on any Exertion for the common Cause, the Good, and general Interest of the Commonalty ; and the Offices he has gone through, which I have but lately heard of, would have been so many Opportunities of Power, had it been exerted to the Support of that Body Corporate, and to the mutual Welfare of every Individual.— But, Alas ! Where Nature has denied its Gifts, and where our Faculties, and our Powers have been wholly bent to *Mammon* ; Where they have been exercised to selfish Views, and not employed in the Acquisition of Benevolence, we must ever be disappointed in our Expectations of seeing its benign Influence in any Shape beam forth.

What I have already thrown out, will, I believe, be enough to damp your present Intention, and when you have placed
these

these Impediments, to Success, before your Son's Eyes, I fancy it will cool his present Warmth, and cause you both to turn your Thoughts upon something else. To a Profession that may be not so broke down, so mangled as this genteel Art appears to me to be.

Those GENTLEMEN professing the same Art with you, their Conduct, with that of their Apprentices, leads me on, before I conclude, to speak to one Particular more, and whether this is a Point to be contested between Them, and the regular-bred Surgeon, I cannot take upon me to say ; or whether the *Venereal Disease*, the Cure of which to be the Right of the Physician and Surgeon, or whether it is free and open to every Pretender. ---This Decision I shall leave to others, to whom it belongs, to fix and determine this Matter ; but, as, at your Intreaty, I have interested myself in the foregoing Particulars, therefore I wish it was in my Power to ascertain to whom the Right belongs,—in order to which, I have made Enquiry of several concerning this Matter,

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but

but either through a Disinclination to resolve the Question, or through an Indifference to the Thing itself, arising from a full Purse, I have not yet been able to gain any Satisfaction, but should I be more successful for the Time to come, you shall certainly have it transmitted to you. — But if this valuable Branch of Business is to be practised by such different Professors, and so many of them of each Sort, it will no longer be entitled to the Epithet I have bestowed on it, and the Surgeon I fear have a scanty Portion of the Practice, unless the Apothecary's Apprentice (as I have been told they do) should dabble more than they have already, and prepare Work for the Dexterity of the regular bred Surgeon.

The Physicians, I have heard, by their College Charter, have a Right to the Practice of Surgery.—If so, as they are a wealthy, and very respectable Body, I could wish to see them join the Body of Surgeons, to maintain their Right, (if it belongs to them only) not only in this
one

one Branch now before us, but in all others of the Surgeon's Province.

Thus, SIR, agreeable to your Desire, and at your earnest Request, I have made all the Enquiry I was able into the true State of the City Surgeon's Profession, and shall leave you to judge of this Matter, but before you determine upon an Alteration of your present Scheme, I could wish when your Business, and other Avocations will let you, that you would take a Journey hither, and bring my Godson with you, that his Ears may hear, and be fully convinced of what Disadvantages he must expect to meet with and encounter, should he be embarrassed, and linked with the Fetters of an Indenture.—You need not be told I should be glad to see you, my Breast is ever open to your Interests, and I am, without a Compliment,

Your assured Friend,

and

London, March,
20, 1752.

Humble Servant.

F I N I S.

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